PERIODICO EN ESPAÑOL ADENTRO

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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MOMS 4 HOUSING

BATTLE FOR HOMES, EXPOSE CAPITALIST CRIMES!



Free housing for all can't be a right as long as capitalism exists. It is our class that builds houses, and we will take it back by seizing state power.

OAKLAND, CA, JANUARY 21— Hundreds of workers and students support four Black mothers fighting for housing. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members advocated for Moms 4 Housing and showed that it's not greed that causes homelessness; it's capitalism.

For a place to call home

Since November 18, a group of working moms and their children occupied a vacant house owned by absentee real estate boss Wedgewood LLC. During the two months, hundreds came to the house from dawn to late at night to protect the families from a sheriff's eviction and supported their court case. On January 14, sheriffs carried out a military style eviction and shortly after that, the mothers won a limited victory. The struggle continues.

Capitalism causes homelessness

Capitalism is inherently unequal, racist, sexist and exploitative—and becoming more so. The Moms 4 Housing movement lets us see more clearly that capitalists and their puppet politicians cause homelessness. They make the laws that say it's legal to hold onto empty homes and illegal for unhoused people to move in. The Moms 4 Housing website correctly says, "We believe it is a crime to keep homes vacant while people suffer on the street from the California housing crisis." Over 4,000 families in Oakland are homeless, even though there are four housing units standing empty for each homeless person (sfcurbed, 11/29/19). In Oakland, 80 percent of the homeless are Black, while immigrants and other workers also suffer disproportionately from evictions and housing insecurity. This contradiction is foremost in the minds of protestors and Moms 4 Housing.

Oakland was a destination for Black families migrating in the 1940s but the government's systematic racism plagued the Black workers. "Officials constructed freeways, train tracks and federal buildings that literally destroyed homes and tore neighborhoods apart. Federal 'redlining' practices embedded racial inequality and segregation into the city's development, with banks allowing wealthy white communities to flourish while denying home ownership to black families. A corrupt police agency brutalized and jailed innocent black [workers]"(The Gaurdian, 6/1/18). While all of this is legal under capitalism, finding housing in a vacant property is a crime. A system that robs workers of housing does not deserve to exist.

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment

This movement has drawn support from many anti-capitalist fighters. PL'ers distributed CHALLENGE, met workers and students, and initiated discussions on how we can build a communist movement to get rid of capitalism once and for all.

The nonprofit Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) is instrumental in this movement. In the first week of the occupation, ACCE held a march against displacement and realtors like Hines, a privately-owned global real estate company that built MacArthur Commons, which gentrifies Oakland and excludes working-class renters: (a studio is considered "affordable" at $1408/mo. Market rate is $2535/mo.)

This rate is clearly out of reach for homeless and low-wage workers. By participating in ACCE, PL'ers are able to show that reforms are limited and temporary. To ensure housing for all, the whole damn system has to go.

Experiences like these are steps to learning how to fight together for an egalitarian, communist society where the working class collectively produces and distributes for need.

Disrupt SB50

On January 10, 60 members and friends of Moms 4 Housing, including PLP, disrupted a press conference by the authors of a bill SB50 to expand zoning for luxury condominiums in Oakland. For the entire press conference, chants such as "Housing for need, not for greed" and "housing is a human right" filled the room. The press could not hear the bill's authors, the Mayor, and their developer friends.

The Mothers spoke out against the high rents and developer's plans for gentrification through SB50. They vowed to stay in the house to set a precedent for the right to housing. The politicians and developers behind SB50 are looking to maximize profits from the housing crisis by promising a small percentage of "affordable housing" in new high-rises. We are looking to beat back their high rents as we build a movement for communism where all housing will be based on need.

Beat back the militarized eviction

On January 14, after Wedgewood won in court, sheriffs in flak suits carried out their eviction with a battering ram, a robot, armored vehicles, tasers, and huge military rifles. Two of the Moms and two supporters were jailed. The movement reacted to this racist, terror attack with courage and militancy.

The huge show of force at the eviction shows that the speculators and their bought-and-

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OUR FIGHT

✰Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✰The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✰Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✰While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✰Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✰Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✰Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✰Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✰Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✰Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

France: declining empire & rising fightback

WE WANT YOU

to join the Progressive Labor Party!

The working class in France is on the move, with a bold and militant transit strike that has lasted more than six weeks and enlisted strong support from workers throughout the country (Odaxa poll, 1/8). At its peak, the action involved more than a million workers, from electrical workers to ballet dancers. In a period of intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry and harsher repression by the capitalist bosses, spontaneous fightback and class struggle is also on the rise.

Behind its investment banker president, Emmanuel Macron, the declining French ruling class has aggressively attacked workers in France and its former colonies in Africa. As Progressive Labor Party has pointed out, inter-imperialist competition—chiefly among the U.S., China, Russia, and the European Union—will inevitably lead to world war, as the bloodthirsty bosses scramble to protect their profits. France, in particular, is a dying empire desperate to keep its iron grip on the workers it exploits. Only by building an international communist movement, led by PLP, can workers move forward in this period—to resist the capitalists, and then to conquer them with communist revolution.

Nationwide strike

Last December 5, transit workers in France walked out of work and triggered the longest labor strike in French history. Workers shut down buses, trains, and high-speed rail lines, costing the bosses millions in profits. The strike was sparked by Macron's proposal to savage the country's pension system, cutting the average pension by 30 percent while raising the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64. These vicious reforms would most punish workers who'd taken time off due to injury or to raise children. The French pension system, established in the 1940s, is relied upon by France's elderly, who have the lowest rates of elder poverty in Europe.

The working class in France has a long history of fightback against the bosses, going back to the Paris Commune of 1871. But this revolutionary history and spirit has been undermined by divisions in the working class and racism toward African and Arab immigrants, who are segregated in impoverished and neglected suburbs of major cities.

The immigrants' struggles for survival have been ignored by sell-out trade unions and fake-left political leaders (Atlantic, 2/26/19), despite a three-week uprising in 2005 and repeated fightbacks since. Without multiracial unity against racism and the bosses' state, the current upheaval will be sorely limited, both for immediate impact and for longer-term, revolutionary change.

France's imperialist conundrum

The French bosses' profits are driven both by their exploitation of workers at home and their continued economic control over 14 former colonies in Central and West Africa, which provide a steady flow of cheap raw materials back to France. The former colonies are required to hold 50 percent of their foreign reserves in the French treasury, while French multinational firms retain rights to extract natural resources from the region.

To guarantee the continued flow of resources and profits, France has threatened to withdraw troops from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania as they face increasing violence from Islamic nationalist fighters (New York Times, 1/12). At the same time, France is using its permanent military bases in Africa to train anti-Islamist militias that have carried out genocidal massacres (International Crisis Group, 3/25/19).

Meanwhile, China has increased its investments throughout the region to $38.4 billion in 2016, as compared to France's $7.7 billion. And where China is investing heavily in infrastructure and economic development in Africa, France's imports remain heavily concentrated in commodities.

Revolution v. reform

The current upheaval in France recalls the lessons learned from the even more massive rebellion in May 1968, which toppled a government (see PL Magazine,1968, www.plp.org/pl-magazine/selections). Months of strikes and student protests against U.S. and French slaughters in Vietnam and Algeria led to the bosses' state terror against students, and then to a general strike. Despite mass militancy and revolutionary fervor, workers and students were sold out by the fake-left Communist Party of France, which misled them back to the bosses' elections. The capitalists remained in power, and workers' reform gains were ultimately reversed. Like Bernie Sanders and other social democratic reformers in the U.S., the French "Socialist" Party—which later elected two presidents and groomed Macron—helped lead the way to betray our class.

Workers can't rely on liberal politicians or boss-controlled union leaders to protect them from the capitalists' attacks. While Macron has been pushed into a partial retreat, both in France and in Africa, history shows that the working class can't be fooled into believing that any imperialist rulers have their best interests at heart. Far from it!

The only way to smash worker exploitation is to build Progressive Labor Party and fight for communism against the global capitalist class. Join us! We have a world to win!✪

Sexist capitalist violence kills Juanita; co-workers organize



CHICAGO, JANUARY 18—A group of multiracial workers and students braved the frigid weather to hold an antisexist vigil across the street from a Westside hospital where Juanita Hankins worked. She was a 32-year-old Black woman who was found beaten to death in a hotel room on Christmas day, at the hands of her ex-partner.

Juanita sadly joins the far too-long list of working-class adults and children who have lost their lives as a result of sexist violence. Far from being just a local issue here in Chicago, public health data and our own personal experiences show this type of violence as a worldwide systemic problem that is facing crisis levels.

Comrades from the international communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) were active in organizing and participating in this event. We fight this antisexist struggle with our working-class folks because sexism is a divisive tool and exploitative weapon against our class.

Capitalism = root of sexist violence

Even though individual and group actions against sexism can and do make a difference, they can't alone attack the root cause. Sexism is highly useful to the capitalist bosses in the way that it generates billions annually in sexist wage inequalities. It also prevents workers from uniting to fight our common enemy. Although sexist oppression pre-dates capitalism and began with class society, the international capitalist class is the class that benefits from sexism. The biggest perpetrators of sexist violence are the bosses!

Much like fighting racism, the fight against sexism requires a united international working class organized in a mass PLP to destroy capitalism with communist revolution. Before, during, and after revolution, all workers, especially Black women workers, will take leadership in fighting for and building an egalitarian society that meets our needs.

Antisexist solidarity in action

When co-workers heard about Juanita's brutal death, it was like a punch to the gut. We felt for her, her family, especially her mother and two young children left behind.

What was almost as shocking as hearing about her murder was the culture of silence at our workplace regarding it. In the face of such widespread sexist violence, it is easy to normalize it. This leads to greater mistrust, alienation, and trauma among members of our class.

But enough of us were unwilling to give into further divisions and fear, and so we organized this vigil: "We Will Not Be Silent: A Vigil against Sexist Violence."

A PL'er kicked it off with a welcoming speech, giving some background of what motivated us to organize the event, as well as some goals for moving forward in a collective way. He stressed the profit system's use of sexist violence and exploitation, and the need for all workers to become fighters against sexism.

This was followed by a public health graduate student/teaching assistant sharing some staggering data that detailed the vast extent of the problem. She explained that sexist violence is an international, systemic issue with deep connections to other forms of capitalist-based violence, such as imperialist war and racist police murder.

There were testimonies about local women who were lethal targets of this violence around Chicago within the past year:

- Dr. Tamara O'Neal of Mercy Hospital
- Ruth George, a 19-year-old college student
- Lyniah Bell, another college student who was shot in the head by her boyfriend who was showing off his gun.

Along with Juanita, our goal was to honor their memories, while stressing how seemingly sexist attitudes and actions can escalate into something much worse.

We concluded the vigil by inviting everyone present to sign a poster board that outlined eight antisexist pledges to help continue the political struggle. The pledges included fostering an antisexist workplace and being an active fighter against sexism in our communities. We plan to share the board in our workplaces as an invitation to other workers and students to commit to antisexist action.

This action helped bring friends, who got organizing experience, closer to the politics of PLP.

A violent sexist culture feeds off of capitalism

As our public health worker friend pointed out, the extent of sexist violence worldwide is downright shocking. In Chicago, the number of sexist attacks continues to rise, while sexist judges and courts under capitalism show very little interest in protecting victims, even as they're attacked multiple times (Chicago Tribune, 5/2/19). Far from being the hero "saving the day" as garbage TV shows like "Law and Order" would have us believe, racist and sexist kkkops are active abusers, such as when a Chicago cop sexually assaulted a worker in custody (WGN, 3/21/18).

Sexist murders in Mexico have reached new deadly heights in recent years, doubling in number (DW news, 8/21/19). Between 2008 and 2019, over 3,000 transgender people were murdered in over 74 countries (LGBTQ Nation, 11/20/19). This violent sexist culture feeds off of capitalism. The special oppression based on gender and sexuality stems from class society. No one in the working class, including men, benefit from such divisions. This culture of sexist violence stems from a profit system that super-exploits women's labor and justifies this exploitation with sexist ideologies.

Sowing the seeds of antisexist struggle

PLP is building a mass antisexist, antiracist movement against capitalism. In doing so, we fight for the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class to give leadership, especially Black women. Women and men must unite in fighting for an antisexist and antiracist communist future. Justice for Juanita, Ruth, Tamara, Lyniah, and all targets of sexist violence! Fight for communsim!✪

Moms 4 Housing deserves communism

Continued from front page

paid-for politicians fear a growing solidarity.

Their attempt to stop us through terror did not work. A week later, the Moms were greeted as heroes at the Reclaim Martin Luther King March. It was a good experience in collective action and fightback. We need to continue to build the anti-racist, anti-sexist strength of a united working class that can take on the capitalists all over the world.

After a week of worldwide publicity, the Oakland political apparatus and Wedgewood brokered a compromise. Wedgewood will allow the Oakland Land Trust to purchase the property. This compromise will not destroy Wedgewood or take profiteering out of the housing market. This is an immediate win for the Moms 4 Housing movement. Some families will get some relatively affordable housing. Overmore, this movement build confidence in workers' ability to fight back.

This reform victory is limited: the real estate and banking capitalists will continue to displace families en masse for profit.

Moms 4 Housing challenges the capitalists' golden rule

The Moms 4 Housing movement takes on a fundamental tenet of capitalism: private property is protected by the law. This is a golden rule of capitalism: the one who has the gold makes the rules. Companies like Wedgewood belong to the class that controls the politicians who make the laws that protect their property. They also control the cops and use them to protect their wealth.

PLP applauds the women who continue to bravely stand up to the bosses and their state terror (cops, courts, prison). The working class needs more leaders like these. Whatever reforms we win will not solve the housing crisis because the capitalists are forced by their own system to constantly increase profits and exploitation.

In a communist society, workers collectively produce housing because the international working class needs shelter. Production will be for need, not for profits! Fight for communism and workers' power!✪

Letter:

NYC anti-displacement struggle attacks liberal sellouts



I attended a Martin Luther King march organized by the Coalition to Protect Chinatown & Lower East Side. The main lesson is that we cannot trust liberal politicians and that we can only rely on the working class to get what we need.

I've been involved in fighting the housing crisis affecting the vast majority of workers in New York City. This is the second year I've participated in the MLK march to call out the city's racist displacement agenda. The rally had a multiracial and multi-generational character. While the march was smaller than last year's, it was qualitatively better. The workers speaking testified to the communities organizing to unite all members of the community: Black, white, and Latin, and Asian against the City's racism, in order to fend off their plans to build four luxury mega-towers not just in Chinatown and the Lower East Side, but throughout NYC.

Moreover the politics of the march were sharper. Last year, the coalition ended the program by directing us to vote for a better public advocate. This year, the speakers emphasized the need to organize and not depend on politicians to change the system. Our speakers publicly exposed the local liberal Big Fascists by denouncing Councilmember Margaret Chin and Mayor Bill de Blasio, and their record of colluding with real estate developers and displacing communities. Though Chin is Chinese and de Blasio has Black family members, they are not friends of workers.

They also called out Corey Johnson, the head of the City Council, and a representative of the gay rights movement. We delivered a 5,000-signature petition demanding Johnson stop the mega-towers and support our community led rezoning plan to protect the entire neighborhood from more luxury out of scale developments,that destroy the environment and displace workers. He was nowhere to be found. The coalition charged him with covertly facilitating the displacement of the community by electing to use the city's sham land review process called the Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP).The ULURP process exposes the fundamental futility of capitalist democracy, because the bosses let you participate in it to fool you into thinking your voice matters, but ultimately they use it to give their class (in this case the developers) more power to exploit workers and rob us of resources.

Through experience, the workers in this mass organization are learning that the only way workers can win is if we unite against racism without the handouts of politicians. In this political climate, not many workers are calling out the liberals in addition to the conservative scumbags. Most nonprofits are laser focused on just president Donald Trump being the main enemy. Hence, it is progress for this multiracial group of workers to attack all politicians.

A few Progressive Labor Party (PLP) comrades who attended distributed CHALLENGE and made contact with workers. After the march, I spoke with friends about why liberals are the main danger. I pointed out that this system is rotten and even if we elect members of oppressed groups that profess the best intentions, they will continue to grease the machine that keeps the capitalist machine functioning. The response I received was very positive.

There is a lot of potential to win workers through this area of work. I plan to continue to build a base with the help of fellow comrades, to make CHALLENGE a staple there and to infuse the day-to-day organizing with communist politics. Under communism we would abolish the toxic cycle of ownership, exploitation, and the profiteering of workers' labor and natural resources like air, sunlight, and water. No one would be homeless and housing would be a public non-negotiable right not a commodity that can be bought and sold. We must win workers to the idea that if we the workers create all of the value in society, we should be able to control and decide how it is distributed and for what purpose. That's communism. We must not only fight for better housing conditions today, we must fight for a whole new world, for a better tomorrow.✪

Workers protest Indian fascism



CHICAGO, January 19—Mass South Asian organizations protested against the increasingly sharp attacks on Muslim workers in India by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Two members of Progressive Labor Party distributed CHALLENGE to 50 of the 200 marchers. We held up the paper so people could see the backpage headline, "India: Capitalist Turmoil Rears It's Fascist Head." Protesters responded warmly.

Modi committed genocide

In addition to occupying and shutting down the Muslim-majority region of Jammu and Kashmir, BJP created a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the eastern state of Assam, forcing workers to prove that they'd arrived in India before the mid-1970s. Since most workers lack the required documentation, over two million people, mostly Muslims, have been stripped of their citizenship. They now face placement in detention centers or deportation to neighboring Bangladesh (Time, 12/20/19). Most recently, the BJP government drafted a Citizenship Amendment Bill for fast-tracked citizenship—except for Muslim workers.

No secular democracy

Although the leading slogans were in defense of "liberal secular democracy," the group also chanted "Narendra Modi you can't hide, you committed genocide!" Calling for a secular democracy is a meaningless term under the capitalist dictatorship of the bosses; the phrase assumes there is democracy for workers to begin with.

Self-critically, the PL comrades could have done a better job to engage with these South Asian protesters. Putting a paper in their hand is a start but the personal connection is essential. We also need to learn some of those chants in Hindi. Due to the language barrier, we were unable to evaluate their politics.✪

Teaching working-class solidarity through novels

The following two novels by U.S. communist writer Howard Fast analyze and promote working-class class solidarity. *Freedom Road* (1944) dramatizes the fight against racism in the South after the Civil War, the promise of multiracial solidarity between Black and white farmers during Reconstruction, and its defeat in 1877. *The Proud and the Free* (1950) is about the Rebellion of the Pennsylvania Brigades of the Revolutionary Army in January, 1780, against brutal treatment by their own officers.

These novels can stimulate students' interest in the U.S. history that we have been denied. These books connect the class struggles of the past century and of today, the fight against racism and for working-class liberation with the main, though hidden, currents of life.

Freedom Road

Freedom Road (which went on to be a movie with Muhammad Ali as the lead) is an antiracist novel with a class analysis – exactly what is needed in this time, as class analysis of racism, when not denied outright, is indirectly denied through the liberal theories of white privilege and intersectionality.

Fast's protagonist is Gideon Jackson, a former enslaved worker, who escaped, joined the Union Army, and has returned to South Carolina. He understands the necessity of uniting with white workers, and is elected to the State Legislature. He and other formerly enslaved workers join with working class white farmers to build Carwell, a multiracial farming community.

The former enslavers, still the landowners, engineer the compromise of 1876, the end of Reconstruction, and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the South. Then they organize and incite the Ku Klux Klan terrorists. The Klan besieges and destroys Carwell, killing everyone.

Fast's novel is very clear: relying on "voting" is as futile and self-defeating after the Civil War as it was before. Only violence can defeat the class of former enslavers, who now form a landed aristocracy. They depend on keeping Black labor cheap and passive through terrorism, and by disarming their natural allies,white workers, through the false ideology of "white supremacy."

The most class-conscious personage in the novel is the former enslaver and aristocrat Stephan Holmes. Holmes tells his fellow landowners that their racist prejudice against Black people has blinded them to the abilities and intelligence of the Black formerly enslaved people and of their allies, the poor whites. Holmes uses "race" to disguise "class."

Fast's main source is the book *Reconstruction: the Battle for Democracy 1865-1876*, by James Allen, a historian and member of the Communist Party USA. Allen edited the communist paper *The Southern Worker,* which had to be produced in secrecy since the Party's organizing efforts in the South were subject to fascist attack by the Klan and the F.B.I.

The Proud and the Free

The book is narrated by Jamie Stuart, who, as a 22-year-old orphaned son of indentured servants, joined the American Revolutionary Army in the "Foreign Brigade" of Pennsylvania.

The enlisted men live in slum-like housing near Morristown, New Jersey with little food, clothing or money. By contrast, the officers, led by the Continental Army's General Anthony Wayne, enjoy gourmet food, fine wine, well-tailored clothes, and servants.

The rank-and-file soldiers—Protestants, Jewish, Black, Irish, atheist, and Roman Catholic workers—recognize their fundamental interests in unity on the basis of class, seeing their officers, the gentry, and especially the British, as their common enemy.

Led by a Committee of Sergeants the brigades, through surprise and organization, present a fait accompli to their officers. They form a new, free fighting force. Ultimately the soldiers agree to return to Wayne's army as long as (1) there are no reprisals; and (2) those who are owed a bounty be paid, and (3) those whose term of enlistment had expired are discharged.

Stuart returns to York, PA, and his fiancée, Molly Bracken. But, drawn by loyalty to his comrades in arms, Stuart rejoins the brigade. Then the officers take their revenge.

After the war, Stuart lives a long life. When his beloved Molly dies, he feels lost. Then an escaped enslaved person comes to his home. Stuart realizes that the new Abolitionist movement has goals like those for which he and his comrades had fought in the Revolution but which were never achieved—the liberation of the working people. He joins the Underground Railroad.

Further readings

Fast based this book on *Mutiny in January* (Viking, 1943) by Carl Van Doren, the only full-length study of this rebellion and still a good read today. Auxiliary readings that have proven successful in class include: Sterling North's negative review in the World Telegram & Sun (1950) accusing Fast of "treason" for daring to write about class conflict during the American Revolution, and Fast's "Reply to Critics" from *Masses & Mainstream* (1950). Both are available online.

These novels are inspiring because they present a class analysis, something rare in literature. They advocate for multiracial solidarity within the working class. We need CHALLENGE readers to apply the lessons of these novels to the class problems of 2020.

(For digital copies of the materials named in this article, write to CHALLENGE)✪

Movie Review: The rich are the parasite of workers

Working class people are often portrayed and vilified as leeches in the ruling class' media but in Bong Joon-Ho's 2019 film *Parasite,* agents of the ruling class are the real leeches that eat everyone alive.

As communists, a lot can be dissected from this film as a tool to unite the working class and show the worst of what can happen to workers and families under capitalism. Our stories aren't exactly the same, but all of our struggles do connect through the bloodsucking systems of capital and class.

The award-winning film, created and directed by Bong Joon-ho is about a working class family, the Kims, made up of two young adult siblings, Ki-woo and Ki-jung and two parents, Ki-Taek and Chung-sook, who finesse a wealthy family, the Parks. The Parks end up employing all of the Kim family, unbeknownst to the parks, they are all related and desperately deceiving their way into jobs.

From Working class to Working the Wealthy

Throughout the film, the Kims, who live in a mildew-stained basement level apartment, use outside fumigation to clear their home of stink bugs, use a coffee shop wifi for internet connection, and fold pizza boxes for a living lie their way into the upscale, yet gullible Park's home and trust. The chain of lies starts with a college-educated friend of the Kim's, who recommends their son Ki-woo as an English tutor for the Park's daughter, Da-hye, before he travels abroad. Ki-woo lies about having a degree, rebrands himself as Kevin, then recommends his sister, Ki-jung, who becomes 'Jessica' as an art therapist for the Park's son. Next he reccomends their father, Mr. Kim as the family driver and lastly their mother, Chung-sook as the maid.

Individualism Kills

As quickly as the Kim's gain their footing in the Park family house, they soon stumble when a previous worker revisits the home. During a weekend where the Park family is away on a camping trip and the Kim's are enjoying the Park's house as if it's their own, the Park's former maid, Moon-gwang, returns. Once she does, viewers discover an underground bunker where Moon-gwang's husband has been in hiding from killer loan sharks. Once this is all revealed, the former maid pleads with Chung-sook, the mother of the Kim family, affectionately calling her sister, asking her to understand her need to protect her husband as a fellow worker. In a very individualistic fashion, the former worker is shunned by, Chung-sook, as she scoffs and threatens to call the police.

As expediently the wealthy family disposes of their workers, here a fellow worker has learned to do the same. However, the way of betraying fellow workers for the benefit of yourself only leads to the destruction of all.

Capitalism turns workers against each other

In the next moment, Chung-sook's family and secret clumsily comes falling down the steps into the bunker as one of the kids accidentally calls out 'Dad' after the fall. Being fellow workers goes out the window for all involved as the former maid, Moon-gwang pulls out her phone to record and expose the truth to the Parks. Things get vicious as the two families literally fight each other to the death, and even more intense when the Park family calls home with an early notice that they're returning because of a flood, along with a request for ram-don to be ready for their son.

Ignorant to the realities of others around them, the Park family has no idea how the workers in the film fought tooth and nail to maintain their livelihood and quite literally, their lives.

The priceless cost of your soul

In the end, at a Good vs Bad Indians themed party for the Park's son's birthday, what the son once thought was a 'ghost' would manifest to be the husband of the former maid, ready to take vengeance against the Kim's. He stabs the daughter of the Kim family and in the last stage of complete ignorance and disregard for workers lives, the Park's ask that Mr. Kim get the keys to drive them away from the terror of their own transgressions. The only problem is—they're under his bleeding daughter's body.

This could be read as a metaphor for Mr. Kim to make a decision between his family/fellow worker and his individualism. In a turn of events, Mr. Kim out of upset for the complete apathy for his daughter, stabs the patriarch of the Parks to death and runs. The mother and son of the Kim family are eventually tried in court for fraud and sent to jail, yet in spite of this, the son still holds onto a boulder meant to bring his family wealth and expresses a dream to buy the Park's house to set his family free. Nevertheless, the fantasy of Ki-woo never plays out, the same way the dream of wealth and financial freedom seldomly works in real life for workers.

Communists draw the poison out

Parasite has won a number of awards and it's been announced that Bong Joon-Ho is in talks to turn Parasite into a TV series (Hollywood Reporter, 1/9).Yet, what is a class analysis worth without revolutionary communist ideas to pair it with? With leadership from Progressive Labor Party (PLP), we will win a communist world where the livelihoods of all involved are not determined by a few but made on behalf of the international working class. No infighting for stability or a bloody stairway to the top but as PL'ers, we fight for leadership and development for all. In order to draw the real parasites out with a united force of workers, join PLP or a study group today!✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Puerto Rico: recovery and solidarity efforts at work

Puerto Rico is still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017. This recovery is vastly dependant on the money "given" to the island by the federal government. But these funds have been detained under allegations of local government corruption. Therefore the island is still visibly in ruins.

Since December 28, 2019 Puerto Rico has experienced over a thousand tremors. Most of these appear to have been of lesser significance. But further examination of various structures leads us to believe that the tremors are continuing to cause the weakening and/or collapse of many structures. On January 7 we experienced the strongest tremor (6.4). This one caused the most damage to buildings and houses and also caused landslides. The workers and youth haven't really started rebuilding because the tremors continue.

After the initial tremors, the news reported which areas were most affected by the earthquake devastation (mostly five towns in the southwest side). This inspired many workers and youth to mobilize to help the affected. A group of concerned comrades travelled to one of the most affected towns in the southwestern side of the island. We drove some 30 to 40 miles and we noticed there was heavy traffic along the way. This is not typical on Saturday mornings. Once we arrived, there was still constant traffic. Workers were helping their fellow workers!

We arrived in Guayanilla at around 9:30 AM. Donations we had received allowed us to purchase supplies that were necessary for their recovery. We noticed many fellow workers doing the same thing.

One of our members knew many people from the neighborhood. These are regular working class folks. They are not revolutionaries (or at least they don't know yet that they are) and possibly vote in the phony elections pushed by the local and federal governments. While introductions were being made, one woman from the area suggested how to best organize our efforts. She started dividing our supplies in particular boxes for each household. Thanks to her initiative we were able to hand our supplies to those most in need in that community.

While there we had many discussions about how the government is handling this emergency and mostly about the impressive response of solidarity from the working class of the island. The vast majority of workers in Puerto Rico live pay check to pay check, yet almost all have been willing to help others. Most of us agreed that this happens with every collective disaster, with the most recent example being Hurricane Maria.

We are establishing a solid base for more interactions with this community. They welcomed us to come back "anytime and every time we wanted." We said we would be back. Our goal is to spread communism and help all workers and youth understand that it is the only thing that can truly help us destroy this capitalist society and build an egalitarian one.

Later that night it was reported on the local news, that a storage building containing an excessive amount of supplies for assistance to populations was discovered in disaster situations like the present one. All this time this unit was unknown to the majority of the public and was not used at all during the three weeks of emergencies. This "unveiling" was done violently by workers who were upset that it wasn't being utilized by the government to assist the population. The news caption showed upset workers breaking in locks and doors and gates, liberating these sequestered supplies.

Despite this militant action, it is important to note that without class-consciousness incorporated into this struggle it will not solve our short-term, or long-term problems. We are actively engaged in this struggle with our limited resources but also with the abundance of our tool for this fight – communism!! Long live communism!!

★★★★★

Worker explains racism behind new transit contract

Last month, TWU Local 100's members voted to ratify its dismal contract agreement with the MTA. Given the lack of strong, worker-led fightback against the union's givebacks, the passage came as no surprise.

It's clear that much more work needs to be done to organize the rank and file.

The racist agreement provides mostly Black and Latin MTA workers with pathetic pay increases falling below inflation rates, forcing them to pay substantially more in medical co-pays and reducing overtime availability, among other things.

MTA bosses proudly sang its praises, championing the millions of dollars these changes will save them off our backs.

Other workers outside Transit will suffer as well.

Case in point.

One of the contract's provisions seeks to have the TWU work directly with the MTA on "new initiatives" for its fascist "farebeating" campaign. With the MTA Board voting recently to waste $249 million on 500 new transit cops, as part of this effort, Local 100 is giving a blank check to the Authority to harass, intimidate, and assault Black and Latin kids.

Though ratified, many workers don't have confidence in Local 100 to get us a decent contract. And it showed.

According to the American Arbitration Association, only about 15,300 of the 35,000 plus Local 100 members sent back their mail-in ballots.

We need to build much stronger relationships with our co-workers. And it goes beyond just strictly discussing the agreement.

In some of the crew rooms at subway terminals and train yards, I've started bringing up the real reason we can't get a decent contract: racism.

The MTA's other agencies—Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road—are paid substantially more than we are, and it's no coincidence they have more white workers. Unfortunately when I bring these points up, my colleagues agree, but they also push the tired, Black capitalism-influenced line that "We're divided as a people," and that all Black workers do is "tear each other down" and "we need to stop killing each other" before we come together to fight for better work conditions.

Capitalism works to divide ALL workers. And the racism shown towards transit workers in the city hurts white transit workers too, because their wages aren't keeping up. I've had to challenge this victim-blaming a few times. Self-critically, because I'm still in the training phase, I had some ambivalence to engaging in such conversations.

But they have to be had. Some of my co-workers also speak in support of the farebeating campaign. They've mentioned that they've seen kids wearing the latest Jordans or with an i-Phone jumping over the turnstiles or not paying the bus fare.

Because, of course, people who might be struggling financially should only wear shoes with holes in them, and have giant 90's cell phones! They don't deserve any comforts here and there. This line of thinking pits worker against worker.

Even if some people who don't pay the fare could afford to, that doesn't excuse the biggest farebeaters of them all, the MTA bosses!

The same ones who make exorbitant salaries off our labor and by cutting our benefits and train and bus service in general. The bosses who never even ride the train, but are lining their pockets off of pillaging its infrastructure. It's key that workers understand that.

We need to take worker cynicism and turn it into a movement for not just a better contract, but a communist world.

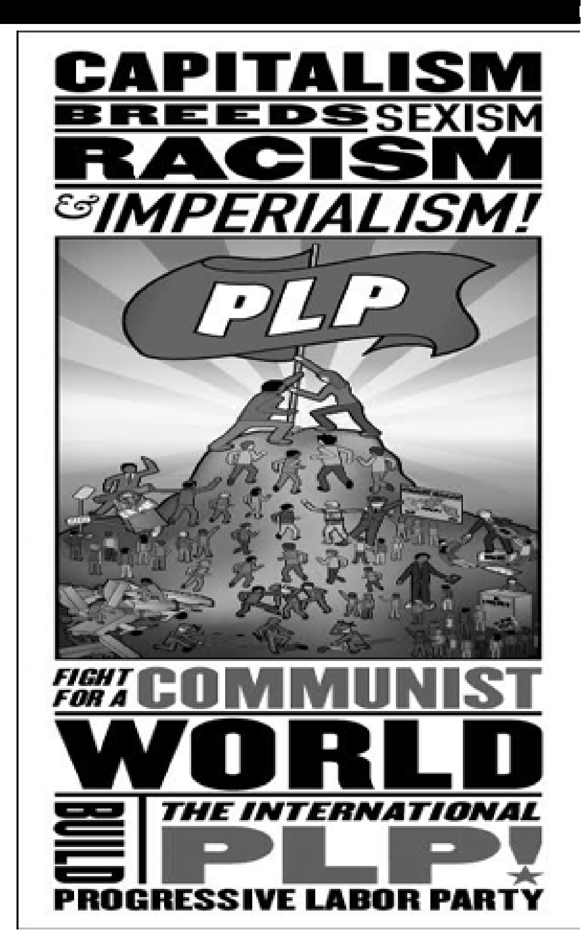
PLP comrades working in the MTA will continue talking and organizing with our co-workers and giving them CHALLENGE to show them that that world is possible!

★★★★★

Lenny Moss cooperates with cops

The review of the latest Lenny Moss book *One Foot in the Grave* in CHALLENGE (1/22) was very good except for three things**:**

1. The remark in the second paragraph about Lenny notifying the police and working with Detective Williams is NOT something that occurs "early on" in the series (which to me is a STRENGTH of the early books). We do not, under any circumstances, seek the cooperation of the police or accept it if offered by the racist/fascist thugs in blue.



2. Lenny's eventual decision to work with Detective Williams should have been criticized.

3. The closing remark about reformism is just tacked on. We should present communism as the only solution throughout.

★★★★★

Capitalism's endless wars

I am a worker who was forced by the draft into the Korean War in 1952-3 and exposed to the horrors of a country totally destroyed, along with 4 million Koreans and 50,000 U.S. soldiers killed. Lucky to have survived, I decided to study history to understand wars and if they could be prevented. I discovered that U.S. history from it's beginning was about endless wars created by U.S. capitalists to profit from slavery, colonies and war production. I would like to relate here what I learned about wars starting with Korea.

After World War II, U.S. war factories were shut down causing a big economic recession until capitalist war propaganda created the Korean War to restart the war industries. The Korean War was soon followed by more war propaganda, the Vietnam War, creating a booming U.S. war economy, but left 3 million Vietnamese murdered, and another 60,000 U.S. soldiers killed. When the U.S., the world's most ruthless war machine, was defeated by Vietnam, a tiny country with no weapons except a strong people, a huge American public anti-war sentiment arose which was called the Vietnam Syndrome.

Meanwhile the countries crushed by the fighting of World War II, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, were rebuilding and became major competitors to U.S. industry. Another economic recession loomed in the 1970s featuring inflationary interest rates of 20 percent, followed by a 20 percent oil price hike from Middle East countries that had been exploited by the U.S. and who wanted to take advantage of U.S. weakness from the Vietnam Syndrome.

History shows that most U.S. wars were started by false acts of provocation, as was the case with 9/11. President Bush blamed the attack on an "axis of evil," including Iraq and Iran which happened to be the two largest oil reserve countries. Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded, torn apart and occupied by the US. weapons of mass destruction to attack the U.S., the rationale for the Iraq invasion, were never found but the giant oil fields were found and quickly exploited by U.S. corporations.

Now the U.S. is again supposed to be under attack from a relatively small country, Iran, which has huge oil deposits but are in opposition to U.S. imperialists.

My history lesson is that capitalism has been and will always be ready to destroy the working class for its profits unless we join the Progressive Labor Party and unite with other workers to destroy capitalism first.

★★★★★

Learning to read the news like a red

Having a "red eye on the news" is important for workers because it's the only way we can sift through the garbage heap of daily capitalist lies for insights about the world situation. This helps us connect the world situation of sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry with the condition of the working class. Very often when liberals complain about expensive weapons systems they sound like they are anti-war. Actually these Big Fascist imperialist liberals are debating how best to prepare for war with China and Russia. And it is our job, as communists in the Progressive Labor Party, to prepare workers, students and soldiers to disrupt these imperialist war preparations and organize for communist revolution.

Here's an example of how the U.S. main imperialist wing of capitalists is exerting influence through the liberal media!

B-21: Ok boomer

On 6/5/18, popular liberal online magazine Salon.com reposted an article originally posted on TomDispatch.com titled "The Air Force's strange love for the new B-21 bomber." This new stealth, nuclear-capable bomber is in secret development by the U.S., and its full name is the "B-21 Raider," after a famous World War II U.S. bomber squadron called "Doolittle's Raiders."

The Air Force brass' nostalgia for World War II and fantasies of mass bombings aside, the article is critical of this outrageously expensive new bomber. It is a well-written, sensible, even punchy critique detailing the immense taxpayer costs and terrible operating records of other big weapons systems and alludes to the increased chances of horrifying nuclear holocaust these weapon systems represent.

Our friends and many workers might agree with it, including us, if we're not careful.

But attentive CHALLENGE readers would've noticed that while the article mentions politics, the critique focuses on economics: the taxpayer (working class) cost to the profit-driven "military industrial complex." And the profits are huge. With enormous price tags and automatic cost overruns, these profits are guaranteed for years. For capitalists that don't really care about defending the U.S. imperialist empire and actually winning wars, useless weapons systems are a profitable no-brainer.

But the imperialist wing of the U.S. ruling class has a worldwide empire to defend. They want to win the next world war. And here lies the real danger of the article. It is a warning that the U.S. military is lethal enough, and the tax money should be spent elsewhere. Democratic candidates like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have part of the answer. They call for 'Medicare for All,' student debt relief, university funding, all while the military takes up the vast majority of the budget. These are desperate attempts to win youth loyalty to U.S. imperialism, which they call U.S. democracy. But the bosses don't yet know how to win today's youth to war. These liberal Big Fascists want a multiracial, multigender military dedicated to defending U.S. imperialism. That means a draft and not some overpriced, ineffective bombers.

Scratch a liberal

Even without the benefit of being a past CHALLENGE reader, the connection to the liberal, imperialist wing of the ruling class becomes apparent as we scratch beneath the surface. The author of the article, William J. Astore, is a Lieutenant Colonel who taught at the Air Force Academy. The article first appeared on TomDispatch.com, a project of journalist and academic Tom Engelhardt. It might seem strange that a high-ranking officer would publish an article criticizing the military on a website famous for its liberal reporting! So, let's go deeper.

Engelhardt began as a student with some leftist politics in the 1960s, opposing the Vietnam war and praising then-revolutionary China. Decades later as a journalist and author, he worked with journalists like Jeremy Scahill and "leftists" such as the liberal, anti-communist most famous among academics, Noam Chomsky. Engelhardt, Chomsky and others also publish "The American Empire" series of 35 books, which analyze, sometimes engagingly, but often unevenly, aspects of the history of U.S. imperialism.

Another step further, the publishing house of the American Empire series, Type Media, which also publishes a liberal magazine called The Nation, lists two important trustees on its website: Oliver Schell, Dean of the University of California Berkeley's Journalism School and member of the John D. Rockefeller III - founded Asia Society; and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, a member of the Rockefeller family-tied Council on Foreign Relations. The Rockefeller family and about one hundred or so other families control the biggest banks and industries in all of U.S. imperialism — including the military.

Capitalism, destroyer of worlds

So some liberals want to cut what they consider a useless weapons system. Politicans like Sanders or Warren say they want to raise taxes for "Medicare for All" and university funding. That money will go for imperialist war, including a draft. They will never cut the military as bigger and deadlier imperialist wars approach. They can't. They're in a bind. But communists and CHALLENGE readers know that whichever candidate wins, war is coming. Scratch a liberal, find a fascist — and a war.

Wherever we are, communists must expose the imperialist war preparations of the liberal Big Fascists. Let's turn their imperialist war into a class war for communist revolution. When U.S. imperialism threatened then-revolutionary China with nuclear attack in the early 1960s, the communists taunted back a warning: "Go ahead and start your war. We'll finish it." ✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that might be of use for our readers

NYT=New York Times

GW= Guardian Weekly

Racism is built into U.S. health care

NYT, 1/14 — Racial discrimination has shaped so many American institutions…it should be no surprise that health care is among them….People of color receive less care — and…worse care — than white Americans….Lower rates of health coverage; communication barriers' and racial stereotyping based on false beliefs.

Predictably, their health outcomes are worse than…whites. African-Americans receieve lower-quality health services, including for cancer, H.I.V., prenatal care and preventive care…[and] less likely to receive treatment for cardiovascular disease, and they are more likely to have unnecessary limb amputations….

"There has never been any period in American history where the health of blacks was equal to…whites. Disparity is built into the system. African-American men…have the worst outcomes of any major…group….a result of…a legacy of discrimination.

At age 45, the life expectancy of black men is more than three years less than…Caucasian men….attributed to a 40-year experiment by the U.S. Public Health Service that shook African-Americans' confidence in the nation's health system.

From 1932 to 1972, the…Service tracked about 600 low-income African-American men in Tuskegee, Ala.,…400…had syphilis. The stated purpose was 'to better understand' the natural course of the disease….The men were lied to…and provided sham treatments. Many needlessly passed the disease on to family members, suffered and died.

…The Tuskegee study revealed more about the pathology of racism than…about the pathology of syphilis….

Black men are…more likely to die at younger ages….One-third of the black-white gap…could be attributed to the legacy of distrust connected to the Tuskegee study….[which] is far from the only unjust treatment of non-white groups in health care. Thousands of non-white women have been sterilized without consent….Between the 1930s and 1970s, one-third of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age were sterilized, many under coercion.

…In the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of Native American women of child-bearing age were sterilized without consent, and a California eugenics law coerced thousands of sterilizations of women (and men) of Mexican descent in the 20th century. (Thirty-two states have had such laws….)For decades, sickle cell disease, which mostly affects African-Americans, received less attention than other diseases….

Routine medical practice continues to treat black and white patients differently….including how practitioners view pain…Needless suffering, and perhaps even death, occurred because provider racism prevented them from receiving appropriate care and pain medication….

…A recent study found that care for black patients is better when they see black doctors….One reason…increased trust and communication.

…If all black men received the same…preventative services as…[whites] it would reduce the black-white cardiovascular mortality rate by 19 percent and shrink the total black-white male life expectancy gap by 8 percent….Although African-Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, only 4 percent of current physicians…are black….

Auto decline linked to opioid epidemic

NYT, 12/31 — The last two decades have brought a sharp decline in automaking jobs in the United States and a rise of a deadly epidemic of opioid abuse….

Opioid deaths were about 85 percent higher among people of prime working age in counties where automotive assembly plants had closed five years earlier, compared with counties where such factories remained open….underscor[ing] the role that economic despair may play in eroding public health….

…The auto industry…[is] symbolic of a broader manufacturing decline,…felt keenly in parts of the country hit hardest by the opioid crisis….

Racist food stamp cuts affect 14 million

NYT, 1/1 — …A new rule that may take away food stamps from nearly 700,000 Americans….[will cause] a decline in the health and well-being of…the country's 14.3 million "food insecure" households….

…A lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life…affects low-income, single-parent, and black and Hispanic households the most….

…Many people receiving assistance are underemployed or the working poor….They work one or two jobs but still aren't earning enough to meet all their basic needs….

Food insecurity is linked to…poor mental health, high blood pressure and diabetes, with children particularly vulnerable….

…Some [food] pantries…on college campuses, help the almost 40 percent of college students who report struggling to afford food….

…A national network of 200 food banks estimates that one-third of the households that use their…food pantries have a member with diabetes.

CINDER BED STRIKERS RETURN TO WORK, STRUGGLE CONTINUES



LORTON, VA, JANUARY 22—After three brave and bold months of striking, the 130 TransDev transit workers at the Cinder Bed Road facility of the D.C. area transit authority (WMATA) have approved a contract and returned to work. (See earlier articles 12/4/2019 and 1/11/20).

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members joined the workers' picket lines and rallies over this period, bringing revolutionary ideas and strategies to these workers, many of whom hail from African and Latin American countries and were enthused to have communist support. The bosses thought they could crush the efforts of these workers by refusing to negotiate seriously, and then not at all. But it was the bosses who finally gave in and the workers gained a partial victory.

Murky contract

The new contract provides for a $3.50 increase in pay for bus operators over two years and a 7 percent increase in pay for other workers in the bargaining unit. Much else remains murky, as the contract language on health insurance is not clearly defined. The contract uncertainties are one way the bosses will try to take back what was won during the strike. That is the nature of capitalism, the bosses try and often do take back whatever gains our class makes during struggles like this. The only way to fully liberate our class from the bosses is to fight for a society run by the working class, communism.

The workers accepted the contract not so much because of its content, but mainly as a gateway to better paying jobs with Metro, the regional transit system. Metro has contractually agreed to end contracting out in two years, fire Transdev (the private contractor), and bring these workers into the main collective bargaining agreement as direct employees of the public transit system.

Lessons from the strike

An important lesson from the strike is that even a small group of workers who provide a key public service – in this case moving workers in Northern Virginia to jobs throughout the region – can, by withholding their labor and shutting down production, fight and win some reforms from the bosses. Could they have done better? More could probably have been won had the 8,000 D.C. Metro workers in the main Metro union forced their leadership to join the strike. While there were some rumblings about expanding the strike to all transit workers, the union limited its support to a large strike benefit and verbal support of the Cinder Bed workers.

Build a base for communism

But beyond the increase in wages, the fight is still going on to build a base for communism among the TransDev and D.C. Metro workers. Our class wins in these kinds of battles when we gain the confidence to fight for a society without the bosses. That is the most important thing about these battles. Under capitalism, any gains workers make are always subject to reversal. The bosses regroup and launch a counter-attack, which we expect to happen in transit shortly.

Only a communist movement which can defeat the capitalist system and replace it with workers' power, communism, can sustain its victories. Defeating racism and building workers' confidence and committment to abolish the wage system of capitalism are essential to the struggle to take power from the bosses.

The PLP members fought hard through this strike to advance this understanding and expect that, before too long, more transit workers will join PLP in the long-term struggle for communism.

